THE
Dan Smoot Report

Vol. 16, No. 26 (Broadcast 775) June 29, 1970 Dallas, Texas

DAN SMOOT

A MAN OF SPLENDOR

We recently received a letter from a high school senior who said:

"What does youth have to look up to today? Dr. Spock? Cynical politicians? Presidents that do not keep their word? Clergy that condone homosexuality, drugs, law-breaking?

"What America needs is more men . . . who have principles and are willing to fight for them."

What can young people do, when they cannot find, anywhere in public life, a man of splendor to believe in; when the great principles of their civilization are derided by fools and subversives who occupy positions of leadership in universities, in government, in churches; when there seem to be no unsullied ideals to live by?

They can do what the young have done in other generations faced with a comparable dilemma: find inspiration in the lives of great men of the past, cling to the eternal truths those men lived by, and thus become torchbearers of civilization. An American teenager today does not have far to look, because his term of life overlaps that of a man who stood among the foremost ranks of the greatest men in history: General Douglas MacArthur.

IN WAR

In February, 1937, General MacArthur warned President Roosevelt that Japan was a growing, aggressive military threat in the Pacific, and that the Soviets were involved in Japanese machinations. Roosevelt ignored the warning, but the soldier was right. Operations of Soviet agents (the Sorge spy ring in Japan, as well as spy rings inside the governments of the United States and of other Western powers) shaped events and influenced policies to the end of deflecting Japanese aggression away from Soviet territories, toward American, British, and Dutch possessions.[1] A result was our Pacific war with Japan.

MacArthur retired from the Army on December 31, 1937, but was recalled to active duty in July, 1941. He was in the Philippines when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

THE DAN SMOOT REPORT is published weekly by The Dan Smoot Report, Inc., Box 9538, Dallas, Texas 75214 (office at 6441 Gaston Ave.). Subscriptions: $18.00 for 2 years; $10.00, 1 year; $6.00, 6 months. Dan Smoot was born in Missouri, reared in Texas. With BA and MA degrees from SMU (1938 and 1940), he joined the Harvard faculty (1941) as a Teaching Fellow, doing graduate work in American civilization. From 1942 to 1951, he was an FBI agent; from 1951 to 1955, a commentator on national radio and television. In 1955, he started his present independent, free-enterprise business: publishing this REPORT and abbreviating it each week for radio and TV broadcasts available for commercial sponsorship by business firms.

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Though Japan struck us, we retaliated against Germany. We limited our forces and supplies in the Far East, in order to give maximum help to England and the Soviet Union in Europe, permitting our Soviet ally to maintain a treaty of peace and friendship with Japan throughout the war.

In comparison with the manpower and material we poured into the European theater, MacArthur was on short rations in the Pacific; yet it was in the Pacific, thanks to MacArthur's genius, where the most brilliant maneuvers were conceived and executed. Never enjoying full support from Washington, MacArthur waged a war in the Pacific which will be a classic example of military excellence until the last syllable of recorded time.

By the end of summer, 1944, MacArthur realized that Japan, already whipped without Soviet help, should be permitted to surrender before the Soviets could enter. In February, 1945 — two days before Roosevelt left for the Yalta Conference — MacArthur, for the second time, put Roosevelt on notice that the Pacific war could be ended without further bloodshed.(2)

Dismissing MacArthur as "our greatest general, but poorest politician," Roosevelt went to Yalta and made deals which brought Stalin into a war we had already won.(2) Immediate consequences were the shattered or lost lives of thousands who fell in the Pacific between February and August, 1945; and the needless atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Longer-range consequences of delaying Japanese surrender until the Soviets were at leisure to enter a war they would not help fight were the Soviet rape of Manchuria, the communist conquest of China, the war in Korea, the war in Vietnam.

In Korea, MacArthur's greatness as a general astonished the world. In brilliance and daring, the Inchon landing which MacArthur conceived and successfully executed has no parallel in the history of warfare. In Korea, 52,246 Americans died in vain, because Truman rejected MacArthur's advice, shackled his efforts, and dismissed him from command.

IN PEACE

After Korea, General MacArthur sounded the tocsin for all Americans to restore the crumbling foundations of their Republic. Here are excerpts from a speech the general made on July 30, 1957:

"The contest for ages has been to rescue liberty from the constantly expanding grasp of governmental power. The great patriots of the American Revolution revolted not so much against the actual taxes imposed upon them by a British King, but against the concept of government behind the taxes: the concept that government had unlimited power to do what government thought proper. They had a deep suspicion that government, if permitted, would waste the labors of the people and ultimately curtail the power of the people, always under the pretense of taking care of the people. That is why they tried to bind the government down with the modest restrictions of a Constitution, limiting the government's powers to the performance of carefully specified responsibilities. . . .

"There are many who have lost faith in this early American ideal and believe in a form of socialistic, totalitarian rule, a sort of big-brother deity to run our lives for us. They no longer believe that free men can manage their own affairs. Their central thesis is to take your money away from you on the presumption that a handful of men, centered in government, largely bureaucratic — not elected — can spend the proceeds of your toil and labor to greater advantage than you who create the money.

"Nowhere in the history of the human race is there justification for this reckless faith in political power. It is the oldest, most reactionary of all forms of social organization. It was tried out in ancient Babylon, ancient Greece, and ancient Rome; in Mussolini's Italy, in Hitler's Germany, and in all communist countries. Wherever and whenever it has been attempted, it has failed utterly to provide economic security, and has generally ended in national disaster. It embraces an essential idiocy, that individuals who, as private citizens, are not able

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to manage the disposition of their own earnings, become in public office supermen who can manage the affairs of the world.

"The Soviets have tried to legislate the perfect society; and today the average Soviet citizen has little more freedom and less comfort than the inmates of American jails.

"The old American philosophy of government more effectively promoted the ideal of human freedom, with greater material abundance for more people, than any social system ever propounded; freedom to live under the minimum of restraint — freedom to make your own mistakes if you will.

"The fundamental and ultimate issue at stake therefore is not merely our money, it is liberty, itself; the excessive taxation of an overgrown government versus personal freedom; least common denominator of mediocrity against the proven progress of pioneering individualism; the free enterprise system or the cult of blind conformity; the robot or the free man."

On May 12, 1962, General MacArthur spoke to the Corps of Cadets at West Point, accepting the Sylvanus Thayer Award for Service to the Nation. Here are excerpts from that extemporaneous speech — the general's last:

"This award is not intended primarily to honor a personality, but to symbolize a great moral code — the code of conduct and chivalry of those who guard this beloved land of culture and ancient descent. . . .

"Duty, honor, country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn. . . . They build your basic character, they mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the Nation's defense, they make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid.

"They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for actions, nor to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never to take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness; the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

"They give you a . . . temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, an appetite for adventure over love of ease. They create in your heart the sense of wonder, the unfailing hope of what next, and the joy and inspiration of life. They teach you in this way to be an officer and a gentleman.

"And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead? Are they reliable? Are they brave? Are they capable of victory? Their story is known to all of you; it is the story of the American man at arms. My estimate of him was formed on the battlefield many, many years ago, and has never changed. I regarded him then as I regard him now, as one of the world's noblest figures; not only as one of the finest military characters, but also as one of the most stainless. His name and fame are the birthright of every American citizen. . . . He has written his own history and written it in red on his enemy's breast. . . . In 20 campaigns, on a hundred battlefields, around a thousand campfires, I have witnessed that enduring fortitude, that patriotic self-abnegation, and that invincible determination which have carved his statue in the hearts of his people. From one end of the world to the other, he has drained deep the chalice of courage. . . .

"You now face a new world, a world of change. The thrust into outer space . . . marked

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the beginning of another epoch in the long story of mankind. . . . In the . . . three or more million years of development of the human race, there has never been . . . a more abrupt or staggering evolution. We deal now, not with things of this world alone, but with the illimitable distances and as yet unfathomed mysteries of the universe. . . .

"And through all this welter of change and development, your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. . . .

"Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be duty, honor, country. . . .

"Your guidepost stands out like a tenfold beacon in the night. . . . From your ranks, come the great captains who hold the Nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds. The long gray line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses thundering those magic words, *duty, honor, country.*

"This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato: . . . 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.'

"The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished — tone and tint. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears, and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen vainly for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll.

"In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory . . . I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes, duty, honor, country. . . . "

MacArthur died two years later — April 5, 1964 — at the age of 84. Was he the last of a breed? *There* is the question which troubles those who could comprehend his greatness. If other hands do not take up the flaming torch MacArthur bore, then his death was an irreparable loss to civilization.

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FOOTNOTES

(1) *MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History*, Major General Courtney Whitney, Alfred A. Knopf Company, New York City, 1956; *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*, Frazier Hunt, Devin-Adair Company, New York City, 1954

(2) "Whose Idea To Buy Russia's Aid?," *U. S. News & World Report*, April 15, 1955

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